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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (6/23): ISRAEL, SOLE BENEFICIARY
OF THE TRUCE

Main Stories:

The visit of French President Sarkozy and his wife to Israel and the Palestinian Territories attracts front page coverage in all dailies.

Al-Quds carries a blue banner headline quoting Sarkozy that, "We will stand with the Palestinians to build the state that they are looking for, and that they have the right to." Sarkozy adds, "There will be no peace without Jerusalem as the capital of the two states." In an exclusive interview with Al Quds, Sarkozy notes that, "settlements are the main obstacle." He also praises the work of Israeli Premier Olmert in the peace process. All dailies highlight that Sarkozy calls upon Israel to, "take risks for peace."

All dailies also report on the visit of the French interior minister to the Dome of the Rock and his laying of a wreath at the grave of Faisal Husseini, former PLO representative in Jerusalem. Finally, papers note that Palestinian President Abbas is expected to receive Sarkozy tomorrow in Bethlehem.

The dailies report on the expected meeting between Secretary Rice, Ahmad Quray, head of the Palestinian negotiation team, and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in Berlin on June 24. The leaders will meet on the margin of the international conference which aims to help Palestinians create a state through grassroots security measures. Donor countries are expected to donate 187 million dollars to be spent on training programs and the establishment of police centers, prisons, courts, and laboratories, the dailies report.

According to the lead story in Al-Ayyam, "Israel is satisfied with Hamas' commitment to the truce." The paper highlights, "a tremendous increase in the numbers of goods entering Gaza." Palestinian President Abbas states that, "the truce in Gaza ensures

a better atmosphere for a direct and comprehensive internal dialogue under Arab sponsorship." Abbas adds that, "we will agree to any mechanism suggested by the Arabs to implement the Yemeni initiative," according to the dailies. Meanwhile Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that Hamas has taken over the Gaza house of PLO representative Abbas Zaki.

Front pages report that Israeli sources claim that Hezbollah is demanding the release of hundreds of Palestinian political detainees in exchange for the release of two Israeli soldiers captured during a cross-border raid in 2006. In news on a prisoner swap with Hamas, Al-Ayyam reports that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert has decided to accelerate negotiations on the release of captured Israeli soldier Shalit, after a "negotiation session" with Israeli security officials.

Tensions between Israel and Iran continue to attract front page coverage in all dailies. According to Al-Quds, Israeli Premier Olmert met with the "planner" of the 1981 Israeli attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor perhaps in preparation of an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. Al-Quds carries a Washington Post story asserting that Israel would not be able to strike Iran by itself. According to the story, Israel might "push" the Bush administration to take action against Iran.

Weekend stories

Sunday, June 22, 2008

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Secretary Rice stated that, "the Palestinian track is more important than the Syrian, and there are chances to reach an agreement before the end of the year," according to Al-Ayyam's front page that quotes recent interviews with the Secretary. Related coverage on Al-Quds' front page carries a German wire story quoting Palestinian Presidential advisor Yassir Abed Rabbo stating, "the Palestinian Authority is close to declaring a position on the continuation of negotiations." Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that Abed Rabbo said, "settlement activities are destroying the peace process."

All dailies lend positive coverage with photos to the graduation ceremony of Palestinian policemen which took place in Jericho on June 21. The dailies highlighted that Palestinian Premier Fayyad attended the ceremony.

Saturday, June 21, 2008

Dailies led with reports on the "ongoing truce" between Hamas and Israel. They highlighted photos of hundreds of Gazan children and their families "having fun" at the beach. Hamas political leader, Ismael Haniyyah, stated on June 20, that the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip will be "fully lifted in ten days." Haniyyah added that, "Hamas will not stop smuggling activities in Gaza Strip." President Abbas renewed his call on all factions to maintain self-control and keep calm in the Gaza Strip, according to the papers. Finally, the dailies highlighted that European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, stated on June 20th that the EU is ready to act as an observer at the Rafah border terminal if an agreement to open the crossing is reached.

All dailies report on the message from Palestinian President Abbas to the UN, delivered by Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations. The dailies quoted Abbas saying, "there can be no peace in the region without solving the Palestinian issue," adding, "our people have not given up their legitimate rights." Abbas said in his message that "the refugee problem is a direct result of Israeli rigidity; Israel has no respect for international law." Abbas called for a "fair" solution to refugee issue, according to the coverage.

The front page of Al-Quds reports that PLO negotiator Sa'eb Erekat asserted that, "Israel is working towards controlling 40% of the West Bank," Erekat added, "the Israeli decision to confiscate more

land in the [Jordan] valley to build military bases will isolate the valley."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Independent Al-Ayyam carries its daily editorial under the title, "The truce and a slightly reduced siege"(6/23): Israel needs the rocket attacks to stop and it has achieved that [goal]. At the same time, it wants to continue its siege (albeit, a bit less restrictive) of the Gaza Strip. Hamas, however, has achieved very little of its demands: a halt to Israeli military attacks... and a loosening of the siege ... Hamas will be the one to feel the difficulty of the situation and the difficulty [of having no other good options] to end the siege [since] rocket attacks [have also failed].

¶2. Independent Al-Quds runs an editorial by Muhammad Jalal Inayah entitled, "The Truce is Hamas' Gateway to Politics" (6/23): For Hamas, the most dangerous matter... is that it is now committed to

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maintaining a ceasefire with Israel... the most radical Palestinian organizations might now accuse Hamas of the same thing that they accused Fatah of: protecting Israel. Hamas' request that the international community reevaluate its attitude towards the [group] will be met by the international community's demand that Hamas commit to the Quartet's principles. This is the international community's world of politics into which Hamas is seeking entry.

Duffy